

CASE ANALYSIS:

PMO SPEEDS SUCCESS FOR TRANSPORTATION FACILITY

Project management principles kept a construction project for the U.S. Transportation Security Administration (TSA) on track despite a rigid budget and brutal schedule.

The United States Transportation Security Coordination Center (TSCC) had only three months and less than \$20 million to build what was expected to be one of the nation's most critical command, control and communications facilities, a round-the-clock point of contact for a variety of transportation security concerns.

The TSCC is charged with gathering intelligence and recommending security risk mitigation strategies. Its daunting duties include monitoring the activities of security screeners and federal air marshals at 429 commercial airports nationwide. Representatives from information sharing and analysis centers established by air, truck and rail companies also will reside in the facility.

The 100,000-square-foot facility evolved from discussions in a 200 square-foot conference room, as TSCC Director Curt Powell notes, and it never would have been completed on time and on schedule without a strong project management presence.

"We had an extremely tight budget that could not be exceeded by a single penny," Powell says. "One of the things we had to do was accelerate the cycle for government procurement and approval, and reduce approval times for construction permits and other matters by half in some cases."

However, the strong project management office (PMO) tipped the project into successful delivery, he says. "A lot of times, the government doesn't invest in having a PMO over everything. Sure, we could have someone great like SPAWAR [the Space and Naval Warfare Systems

Command] to do our systems integration, but their project managers are still tied to the organizations they work for."

The project management structure relied on a team leader from a consultant firm, a master scheduler to oversee the critical path, a master financial manager to keep the budget on track, a procurement specialist to track critical items and a civil engineer.

"Without the master scheduler and critical path, we never could have done this in 97 days," Powell says. "Without the financial managers and procurement specialist, we couldn't have kept the financial blood flowing and keep it from bleeding away. And the civil engineer gave us the technical advice on when we were in code and when we weren't—when the materials were overpriced or we were getting poor-quality material."

At times there were up to 300 tradespeople working simultaneously on different components of the facility. "Building and finishing took place in waves," says Bill Eaton, site lead with program management firm Robbins-Gioia, Alexandria, Va., USA. "People would finish the build-out, and then right behind them came people to lay the carpets. Right behind them were the furniture movers, and when they finished, the IT people were right there to install computer systems."

The facility has received an award from the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties for its project management and overall facility quality.

Although primary construction is complete, full operational capacity will not be reached until 2008, Powell says, while a 13,500-square-foot area of undeveloped space still needs finishing—it will most likely serve as a training center.



Project Summary

Facility: Gather intelligence and recommend action to mitigate security risks or problems for TSA

Primary Construction Start: 7 April 2003

Facility Operations Start: 25 July 2003

Primary Construction Complete: 24 July 2003

Full Operational Capacity: 2008

Work Schedule: 6 days/week, 12-18 hours/day

Initial Budget: \$18.3 million

Actual Cost: 3% to 4% under budget

Keys to Success: A PMO coordinated resources and kept the schedule rigidly on track with an emphasis on completing construction in waves.